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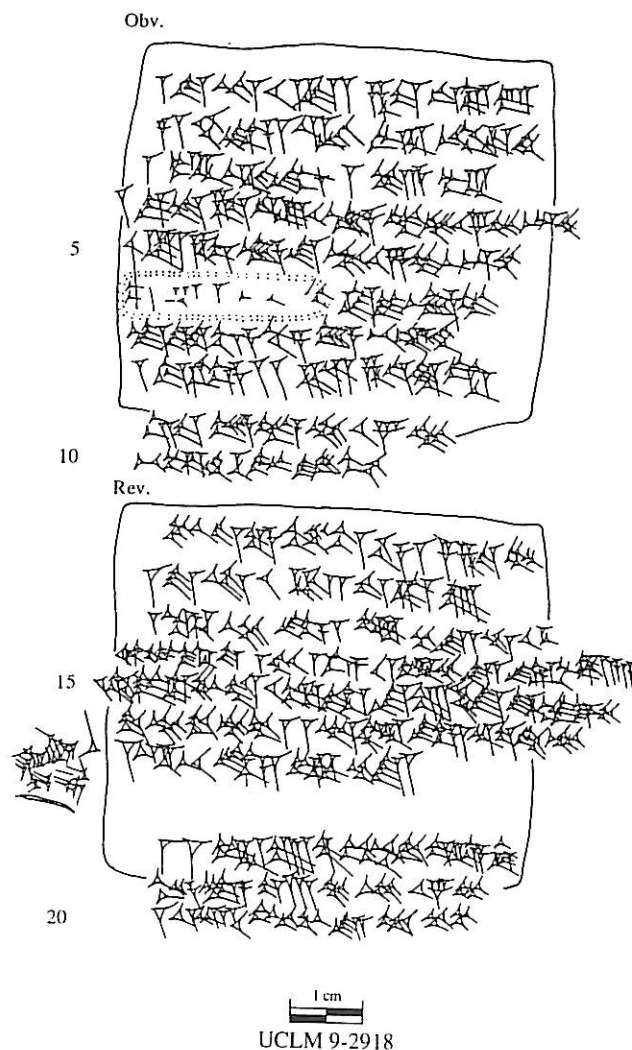
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Of Cyrus, Darius and Alexander: A New Look at the 'Epitaphs' of Cyrus the Great

David Stronach



Scholarship is infinitely the poorer for the untimely loss of Peter Calmeyer whose notable contributions illuminated so much of the heritage of ancient Iran. In this short tribute to a close colleague, who for many years took a deep interest in the ways in which Greek and Roman sources could be used to illuminate Iran's Achaemenid past, I propose to examine certain intriguing matters that chiefly invoke evidence from Pasargadae. First I will attempt to account for the strangely self-deprecating character of the so-called epitaphs of Cyrus the Great (559-530 B.C.) and, in the second place, I will examine the use of at least one out-of-character title in these supposed 'memorial texts' that can be seen to owe its origin to Greek, as opposed to Persian, perceptions of Achaemenid kingship.

Before all else it will be as well to recall the content of the 'epitaphs' that were reportedly seen by the companions of Alexander the Great at Pasargadae. On the basis of observations reported by Aristobulus, Arrian relates, for example, that the tomb of Cyrus was inscribed in 'Persian characters' and that the inscription read '*O man, I am Cyrus the son of Cambyses, who founded the Empire of Persia, and was King of Asia. Grudge me not therefore this monument.*'¹ Strabo, on the other hand, provides an indication that the Macedonians were not only aware of this 'Empire' text, but also of still another, seemingly shorter and simpler inscription. In the first context (in a quotation which almost precisely echoes that given by Arrian save for the omission of any mention of Cambyses) Strabo reports that Aristobulus related 'the inscription... from memory'² in the following terms: '*O man, I am Cyrus, who founded the Empire of the Persians, and was King of Asia. Grudge me not therefore this monument.*'

With reference to the second inscription he quotes a further eyewitness, Onesicritus, to the effect that the tomb carried a text that read: '*Here I lie, Cyrus, King of Kings.*' In this latter instance, moreover, Strabo goes on to state that the inscription was given in more than one language: namely, that it was rendered 'in Greek, carved in Persian letters' as well as in 'the Persian language.'³ Finally, in a decidedly flowery version of the longer epitaph (which

¹ Anab. 6.29.

² Just what we should understand from the qualification 'from memory' is not clear. The likelihood that this normally reliable observer was uncomfortable with the details of this part of his testimony does at least come to mind.

³ Geog. 15.3.7.

follows Strabo in omitting the name of Cambyses), Plutarch⁴ asserts that the inscription read: '*O man, whosoever thou art, and from whencesoever thou comest (for that thou wilt come I know), I am Cyrus, who founded the Empire of the Persians. Grudge me not, therefore, this little earth that covers my body.*' In this case nothing is said of the original language of the text, although Plutarch relates that Alexander 'ordered it to be engraved again below in Greek characters.'⁵

As we shall see in more detail in a moment, each of these supposed 'epitaphs' finds its inspiration in a type of cuneiform text that was indeed erected at Pasargadae in the course of the second half of the 6th century B.C. There is no evidence of any kind, however, to suggest that the smooth stone fabric of the tomb of Cyrus (Pl. I and Fig. 1) ever displayed a carved cuneiform inscription. Indeed, this specific misdirection concerning the place where such 'Cyrus texts' were to be observed is something that represents one among many twists and turns in a complex pattern of events that ultimately serves to explain the nature of the 'epitaphs' that have come down to us in the form that they have.

The testimony of Cyrus

Contrary to suppositions put forward by Herzfeld almost seventy years ago,⁶ Cyrus left no fixed representation of himself at his own capital and, still more remarkably, no visible inscriptions either. If, therefore, we should seek to explore what Cyrus chose to say concerning his royal status and ancestry we are in fact obliged to fall back on the testimony of those inscriptions that Cyrus elected to draw up in the Akkadian language for the principal benefit, it would seem fair to presume, of his new Babylonian subjects.⁷ Outstanding in this regard is the so-called Cyrus Cylinder, a clay barrel-shaped building inscription of Cyrus which was found at Babylon in 1879 and which would appear to have been composed soon after the Persian capture of that city in 539 B.C.⁸ In this inscription Cyrus is initially identified (in a strictly abbreviated manner) as

⁴ Alex. 69.4.

⁵ If we choose to ignore Onesicritus' mistaken belief that one version of the inscription that he observed was given in Greek, inscribed in the Persian script, it does nonetheless emerge from both his assertions and those of Aristobulus that the Pasargadae inscriptions were multilingual, that one version was given in Persian, and that, in one case at least, the separate texts were ordered vertically. Had no other evidence been available, it has to be allowed that even these limited findings would have been useful to have.

⁶ Herzfeld, 1929-30, 13ff.

⁷ P. Lecoq (1997, 31) has expressed the not improbable view that Elamite would have represented the customary written language of the Persian court down to the opening years of the reign of Darius I (the Great).

⁸ See Weissbach, 1911, 2ff.; and Borger, 1967 and 1975, sub Weissbach. The most generally accessible translation is that by A.L. Oppenheim in Pritchard, 1969, 315-316. More recently, see also Kuhrt, 1983, 83ff.

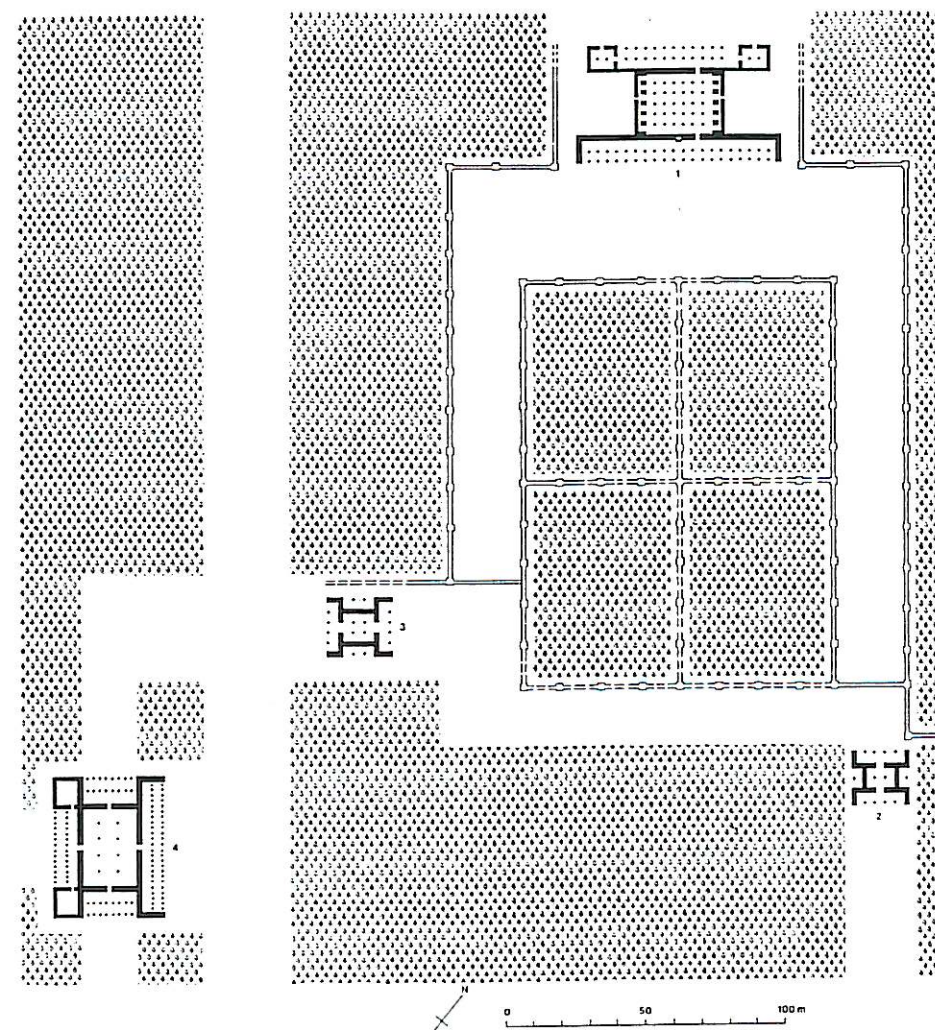


Fig. 1

'Cyrus, king of Anshan' ⁹ and then, at the point where the cylinder provides a full and formal record of the titles and genealogical details that Cyrus wished to commit to posterity, the relevant portion of the text runs as follows:

'I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, strong king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters, son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, great king, king of Anshan, great-grandson of Teispes, great king, king of Anshan.' ¹⁰

In this formal pronouncement Cyrus was clearly concerned to attach to his name not only those locally familiar Mesopotamian titles that stood for global dominion (e.g. 'king of the world' and 'king of the four quarters') but also a number of other long-sanctified Mesopotamian titles, such as 'king of Babylon' and 'king of Sumer and Akkad,' that stood for more immediate, regional authority. Of still other titles that Cyrus could presumably have listed (including, one can only imagine, various Median honorifics not to mention Lydian ones as well) nothing is vouchsafed. On the other hand it is of special interest that so much is made, through clearly conscious repetition, of the distinctive Anshanite titulature of Cyrus' own blood line.

While the argument is sometimes advanced that Cyrus only introduced the toponym 'Anshan' instead of 'Parsa' in his Mesopotamian inscriptions in order to give his Persian homeland a name that would have been more readily recognisable to a Mesopotamian audience, such an interpretation is, in the end, highly improbable. As early as 547 B.C. the Babylonian Chronicle already refers to 'Parsu' (the Akkadian form for 'Parsa') ¹¹ and, as the annals of the Near East make plain, royal rulers do not lightly depart from their established titularies. In sum, the Cyrus Cylinder not only provides what is arguably a complete list of those who preceded Cyrus as kings of Anshan, ¹² but evidence, in addition, for the conceivably continuous, independent condition of the early Persian kingdom of Anshan from the time that it was first founded, presumably somewhere in the years following the fall of Susa to the Assyrians in 646 B.C. ¹³

⁹ Oppenheim, 1969, 315.

¹⁰ For this translation, see Waters, 1996, 13.

¹¹ Grayson, 1975, 107.

¹² Cf. also Waters, 1996, 13.

¹³ Whatever ancestral relationship 'Kurash of Parsumash,' a tributary of Ashurbanipal in the immediate aftermath of the capture of Susa, is likely to have had with the subsequent Persian rulers of Fars, I now think it preferable to assume that he ruled before the creation of the explicitly-named Anshanite dynasty of Teispes (which could well have had its own inception somewhere close to 635 B.C.). Within the bounds of this latter dynasty, in other words, the three monarchs who preceded Cyrus the Great would have been, in accord with Cyrus' own testimony, his three immediate forebears: Teispes, Cyrus I (whose Elamite-inscribed seal of c. 600 B.C. carried the legend, 'Kurash, the

Two other building inscriptions of Cyrus from Mesopotamia are also of interest. While that on a brick from Ur simply says '*I am Cyrus, builder of the Esagila and Ezida, son of Cambyses, strong king,*' ¹⁴ that on a further baked brick from Ur ¹⁵ reads '*Cyrus, king of the world, king of Anshan, son of Cambyses, king of Anshan.*' ¹⁶ In other words, even the most laconic of Cyrus' various Mesopotamian inscriptions never failed to include his patronymic. ¹⁷

As to how Cyrus might have wished to style himself in his own homeland, one or two suggestions can be advanced. Had any such heartland titulary been erected by him (and we know of none to-date) he would undoubtedly have listed his father's name, if not also the names of all his royal forebears going back to the evident founder of his dynastic line, Teispes. He would have assuredly referred, moreover, to the kingship of Anshan where each of his forebears was concerned; and, as his own career progressed, it is not difficult to conclude that he would have found it appropriate to include at least one 'universal' title after his own name. Indeed, the presence of a global Mesopotamian title (such as 'king of the world') would not only have been consonant with the condition of his far-flung frontiers from 539 B.C. onwards, but also with his well-demonstrated penchant for prior Assyrian images of extended power. ¹⁸

The role of Darius

With the beginning of the reign of Darius the Great (522-486 B.C.) we at once move closer to the genesis of the above-mentioned long and short 'epitaphs.' That is to say that the wording in each of these purported memorials can be shown to be modelled, to some extent at least, on the format of one or other still

Anshanite, son of Teispes'), and Cambyses I. Cf. especially, Miroshedji, 1985, 28 and Stronach, 1997c, p. 9.

¹⁴ See, conveniently, Waters, 1996, 13.

¹⁵ Gadd et al., 1927, 58 and pl. 194.

¹⁶ Waters, 1996, 13.

¹⁷ Not to mention the provision of one or another suitable epithet directly following his father's name.

¹⁸ Cf. Kawami, 1972, 146-148; Stronach, 1978, 51ff.; and Stronach, 1997a, 43ff. Irene Winter (1977, 379-383) and Michelle Marcus have each drawn attention to the way in which, as early as the 9th century B.C., local rulers of the northern Zagros region of western Iran 'selected elements of authority and power associated with Assyrian monuments' in order to attempt to absorb something of 'the status of the Assyrian empire' (Marcus, 1996, 22). In other words, this long process of acculturation, which was no doubt at work throughout the length and breadth of western Iran from the early first millennium B.C. onwards (cf. Stronach, 1997a, 45, n. 8), could indicate that Cyrus found it as least as natural to introduce certain elements of Assyrian protective imagery at Pasargadae for what such particulars would mean to members of his extended 'home constituency' as for what they would mean to any visitor from those parts of western Asia, including parts of central western Iran, that had once been ruled by the Assyrians.

extant cuneiform text that has to be ascribed (as we shall see in just a moment) to Darius, not Cyrus. Proof of this claim is owed to many separate factors; for the moment, however, it will be advisable to begin by recalling the specifics of the texts in question.

The first of the two texts, the CMA text, reads: 'I am Cyrus, the king, an Achaemenid.'¹⁹ Examples of this trilingual inscription (written in Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian) were originally displayed on doorjambs or antae in each of the three principal structures within the Palace area, i.e. in Gate R, Palace S, and Palace P (Fig. 1).²⁰ In each case readers of this formula were clearly intended to supply the further, unexpressed message that Cyrus was, of course, the individual 'who built such and such a monument.'²¹ Significantly enough, as far the reported vertical ordering of Aristobulus' 'epitaph' is concerned,²² the inscription's two lines in Old Persian stand directly above a single line in Elamite which, in turn, stands directly above a single line in Akkadian (Fig. 2). In addition, it is possible to detect the presence of two slightly differing physical arrangements of this same inscription. That is to say that, while the vertically ordered trilingual texts in the two older buildings (Gate R and Palace S) each appear to have been cut without the benefit of vertical, connecting side-bars (Fig. 2), the same texts in Palace P were supplied with the extra refinement of such connecting side-lines (Fig. 3).²³

The second relevant text - the CMc text - consists of a label that was cut into the folds of the dress of the main figure in each of the doorway reliefs of Palace P. As has been consistently (and no doubt correctly) maintained, this

¹⁹ Kent, 1953, 116. In the system of sigla that is customarily used to identify the individual Old Persian (OP) inscriptions from Pasargadae (located on the Dasht-i Morghab or 'The Plain of the Water-bird'), CMA stands for Cyrus, Morghab, inscription 'a.' Equally, DMA (for which see below) stands for Darius, Morghab, inscription 'a.'

²⁰ For a summary account of the main elements of the site of Pasargadae, see most recently, Stronach, 1985, 838-855.

²¹ Compare, for example, Darius' DPa inscription from Persepolis, which reads 'Darius the great king, king of kings, king of countries, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid, who built this palace' (Kent, 1953, 135).

²² See note 5, above.

²³ Although R. Ker Porter, a visitor to Pasargadae in 1818, elected to show the no longer extant inscription above the Winged Figure in Gate R with connecting side-lines, this specific trait is not found in later drawings of the same carved doorjamb by either C. Texier or E. Flandin. In following the attestations of the two later draftsmen (for which preference see also Nylander, 1967, 167, n. 52), it is worth noting that Ker Porter's treatment of the individual cuneiform signs was frequently less careful than it might have been. More telling still, he provides a separate, enlarged drawing of the CMA text, with side-bars, which he labels as 'the inscription repeated on all the pillars remaining in the plain' (Barnett, 1972, pl. 5). In other words the still extant Palace S inscription (Fig. 2) is also included, quite erroneously, in this continuously framed category. See also Stronach, 1978, pl. 43, with references, and Stronach, 1997b, 327, n. 23.

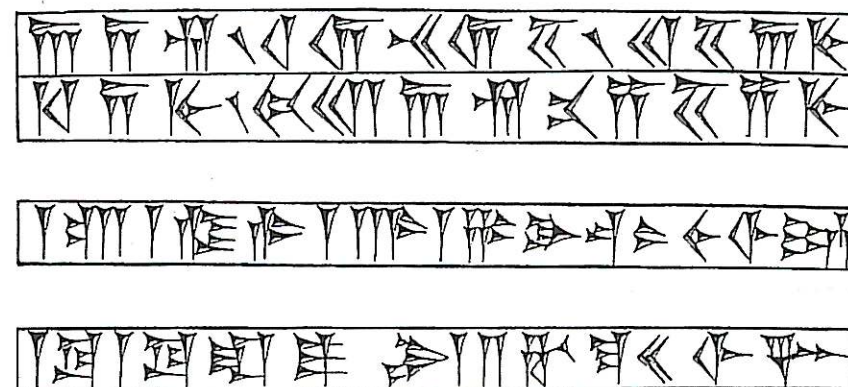


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

was a once trilingual inscription reading 'Cyrus, the great king, an Achaemenid.'²⁴ The fact that only examples of the Elamite and Akkadian versions of this 'garment inscription' were still in situ at the time that Herzfeld came to conduct his pioneer excavations at Pasargadae in 1928²⁵ need hardly surprise. Little if anything of the upper parts of the figures that once adorned the door-jambs in question has ever come to light - and, if the once attached gold pleats at the center of the surviving design (Fig. 4) were not themselves inscribed (in what would have been an acceptable, central location), any inscription in the first language of the realm would have to have been located in a higher position.

While it is not the main burden of this paper to rehearse the full range of arguments that point to Darius rather than Cyrus as the author of the trilingual Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian inscriptions that occur at Pasargadae, some reference to the main considerations that now substantiate this viewpoint can hardly be omitted. From a textual perspective one paramount factor consists of the use of the Old Persian cuneiform script. In paragraph 70 of the Elamite version of his Bisitun inscription Darius appears to assert, at a date close to 519 B.C., that he also wrote a version of the text 'in Aryan,' i.e. in Old Persian, 'which formerly was not.'²⁶ In terms of later practice, moreover, the Old Persian text at Bisitun is unique in that it had to be fitted into a secondary, lower position relative to both the Akkadian text and the original Elamite text.²⁷ In addition, the Old Persian inscriptions at Pasargadae use a type of evolved, diagonal word-divider (Figs. 2 and 3) which is not found at Bisitun but which does occur in all other OP texts.²⁸

Certain key archaeological and art historical considerations also deserve mention. In the first place it is now known that Palace P was anything but a finished structure at the time of Cyrus' death²⁹ - a circumstance which makes it highly unlikely that Cyrus himself would have attempted to add either inscriptions or reliefs to the building.³⁰ In the case of the Palace P reliefs, moreover, they make use of a method of depicting the stacked folds of the Persian robe (Fig. 4) that can be seen to depend on certain formal refinements in the rendering of drapery in Greece which only came into being in an evolved form

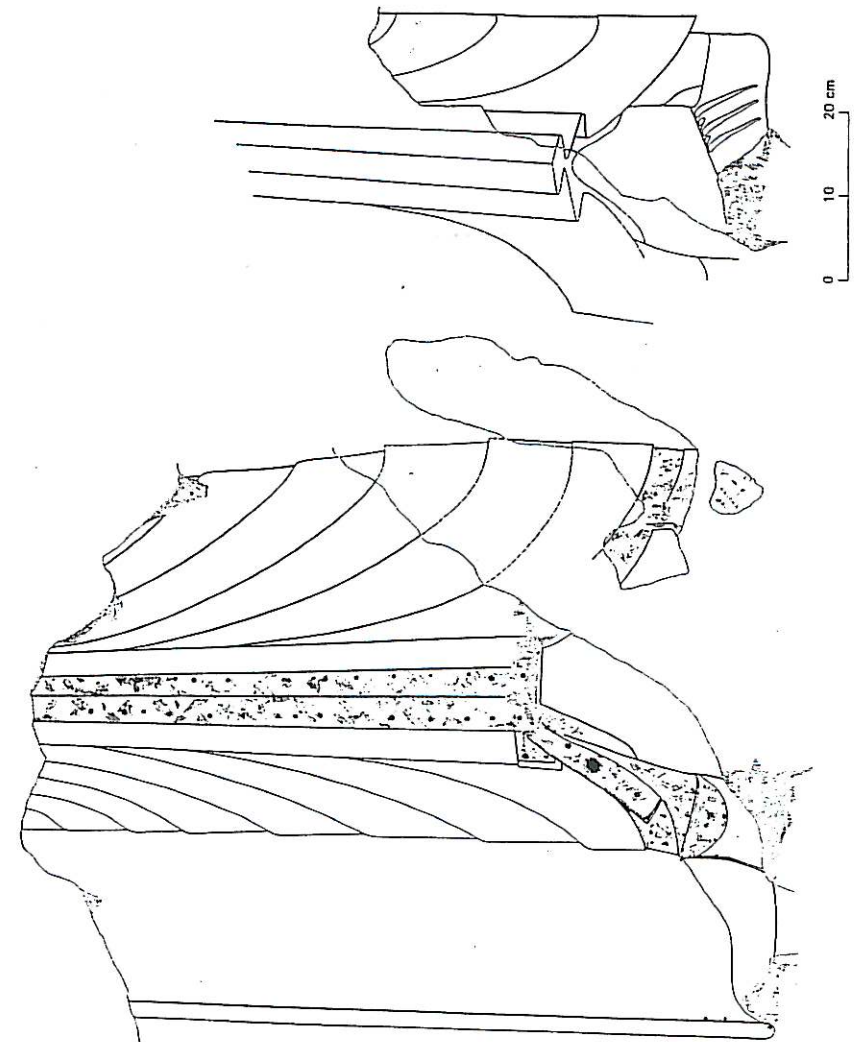


Fig. 4

²⁴ For R.G. Kent's restoration of the 'entirely destroyed' OP text, see Kent, 1953, 107 and 116.

²⁵ Herzfeld, 1929-30, 14.

²⁶ For the most recent review of this much discussed passage, see Waters, 1996, 15.

²⁷ For the arrangement of the various texts on the carved cliff-face, see Schmitt, 1991, pls. 4-5.

²⁸ Kent, 1953, 12, 19.

²⁹ Stronach, 1978, 103ff.

³⁰ As I have indicated elsewhere, 'it was never standard Achaemenid practice to add inscriptions or reliefs to a building prior to the end of any given program of construction' (Stronach, 1997b, 326). Cf. also Stronach, 1990, 197-198.

in the Greek world 'from about 540 and later.'³¹ For this reason it is less than likely that such conventions were already fully available to Cyrus; but, more than this, it is possible to detect a local sequence in the evolution of the Achaemenid drapery style which places the Palace P reliefs in a decidedly late sixth century context. In more detail, the first local (i.e. Persian) adaptations of the Greek drapery convention would seem to occur c. 520 B.C. in the still experimental, far from uniform treatments of drapery in Darius' celebrated rock-relief at Bisitun. Thereafter the early local sequence continues, I suggest, in the order of: the first polychrome brick reliefs of the royal guards at Susa, the Palace P reliefs, and the earliest reliefs from the vicinity of Persepolis.³² In other words the Palace P reliefs are most likely to date to something like 510 B.C. and, by the same token, both the CMc inscriptions that were cut into the reliefs and the CMb inscriptions which once stood above them (and which have been shown, importantly, to have most probably included the name of Darius)³³ are all, of necessity, of like date.

The issue, in short, is no longer whether Darius was responsible for the Pasargadae inscriptions but rather why he chose to erect them at all. In very general terms the answer resides in the nature of the kingship propaganda that Darius used to support his claim to the throne. That is to say that, in order to mask the true nature of his abrupt reach for power, Darius advanced the novel concept of a ruling 'Achaemenid line' to which both he and Cyrus belonged. In this construct Cyrus was not only descended from Teispes but, like Darius himself, from a still more remote founder-figure, Achaemenes. Thus it was that he and Cyrus stood related, that both he and Cyrus could be called 'Achaemenids,' and that Darius could pose, at a moment of evident dynastic crisis, as the sorely needed saviour of the imperiled 'Achaemenid family.'

Needless to say, the essence of this message was first advanced in the opening lines of the Bisitun inscription, even if it has to be said that it was advanced in strangely indirect terms.³⁴ Perhaps as a consequence of this (and perhaps as a specific response to the severity of local opposition to his rule in Parsa),³⁵ he then cast about for some new way to express his original messa-

ge, not least in Parsa itself.³⁶ In this context the uninscribed (and, in certain cases, still unfinished) stone monuments of Cyrus' spacious upland capital presented Darius with an exceptional opportunity. To start with, the trilingual CMA text was cut into a number of the more inviting blank stone surfaces of Gate R and Palace S, the two 'ready-for-use' structures that already stood within the Palace Area of Pasargadae.³⁷ In this instance the message was simple and direct.

To begin with, the phrase 'I, so-and-so, king' was at once available as an already frequently used formula in what was intended to appear as a building inscription.³⁸ At the same time, however, this voice carried the presumably far from accidental implication that Cyrus, the founder of the Persian empire, was himself the author of the message. At the same time the word 'king' provided a minimal (if far from effusive) reference to Cyrus' elevated rank while, above all else, Cyrus was now seen to acknowledge his profoundly required, hitherto only indirectly proclaimed identity as 'an Achaemenid,' i.e. as 'a member of the Achaemenid dynasty'.³⁹

In returning to the wording used in the CMc inscriptions in Palace P, we cannot fail to be struck, however, by the new, more generous reference that is made to Cyrus as 'the great king.' It is here, in fact, that the carved stones of Pasargadae may be said to offer a valuable indication of a visible progression in the official standing of Cyrus between say, 519 B.C. (the date at which the Old Persian version of the Bisitun text is most likely to have been introduced)⁴⁰ and 510 B.C. (the date at which, in broad terms, the CMc inscription is likely to have been composed). It was a period, in short, within which Darius very probably came to realise that the validity of his rule - and more especially that of his heirs - was suddenly less dependent on the initial fiction of an 'Achaemenid family' (which proclaimed his consanguinity with the line of Cyrus) as on the fruitful issue of those unions that he had contracted with each and every

³¹ Nylander, 1970, 137.

³² Stronach, 1978, 96-97. For prior estimations that the Palace P reliefs might deserve to be post-Cyrus in date, see in particular, Frankfort, 1946, 9 and now Frankfort, 1996, 364 with note on p. 34; Richter, 1946, 15f.; Boardman, 1959, 216 f.; Porada, 1965, 158; and Farkas, 1974, vii and 14f.

³³ Borger and Hinz, 1959, 125.

³⁴ In such indirect terms that only the ancestors of Darius stand named as members of the Achaemenid royal line (DB ^o1-4). Accordingly, lest the vital connection should somehow fail to be made, Darius refers in DB ^o10 to 'A son of Cyrus, Cambyses by name' (my emphasis). Cf. also Waters, 1996, 12, n. 6.

³⁵ DB ^o40-41.

³⁶ Amelie Kuhrt (1995, 665) refers to what was presumably 'the deep dismay felt by the [local] populace at the murder of the legitimate Persian ruler, son of the empire's founder.'

³⁷ For a brief review of those features which indicate that parts parts of the fabric of Palace P are later in date than the remains of either Gate R or Palace S, see Stronach, 1985, 845.

³⁸ For parallel uses of the first person voice, see, conveniently, the wording of Cyrus' above-cited building inscription from Uruk, not to mention the language used in the main, above-cited portion of the Cyrus Cylinder.

³⁹ This last perspective, which views the CMA and CMc inscriptions (now better defined, of course, as the DMA and DMC texts) as hitherto unrecognised, primary sources for any future assessment of the reign of Darius, is one that is also taken up in Stronach, 1990, 200-201 and, not least, in Stronach, 1997c.

⁴⁰ Schmitt, 1991, 17.

eligible female descendant of Cyrus at the outset of his reign (Hdt. 3.88).⁴¹ In this context we appear to witness a gradual rehabilitation of Cyrus' official standing at the court of Darius from the time that he fails to receive the courtesy of any royal title in the Bisitun inscription,⁴² to the moment that he receives the bare title of 'king' in the CMA text, to the still later moment when he is at last accorded the same epithet - that of 'great king' - that Darius himself was content to use in his own third person 'garment inscriptions' at Persepolis.⁴³ Indeed, such an upward turn in the court-directed standing of the already long-deceased founder of the empire would appear to have continued well into the following century when Herodotus provides the information (Hdt. 3.89) that Cyrus was revered as 'the father' of the Persians.

The role of Alexander

Before proceeding further it will be as well to recall what is known of the activities of Alexander and his followers at Pasargadae in the period immediately following the fall of Persepolis. By the end of January 330 B.C.⁴⁴ Alexander had captured Persepolis and the vast treasures stored there. Since he was assiduous in collecting the contents of any treasury that stood in his line of march (Arr. 3.18.9; Curt. 5.16.10), it is only logical to suppose that he lost little time in subsequently advancing northwards to Pasargadae where the local royal 'storehouse' (in all probability the fortified, multi-roomed structure that crowned the Tall-i Takht through most of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.)⁴⁵ was reportedly surrendered to him in an intact state (Arr. 3.18.10).

But what happened, or did not happen, during the rest of this initial visit to Cyrus' capital is something that still eludes consensus. It is A.B. Bosworth's necessarily respected view, for example, that little else of note occurred. Thus, while Bosworth acknowledges the care that was taken to see that the tomb of Cyrus and the other monuments at Pasargadae were left intact - in evident contrast to the indignities that were heaped on the site of Persepolis⁴⁶ - he treats the tomb as a structure that, in the main, attracted little immediate notice.

It was a building 'for which Alexander was to show an especial veneration' on his return from India,⁴⁷ but which, in contrast, figured barely at all in the perceptions and activities of the Macedonians at the time of this first encounter. In keeping with this sense of extreme disengagement, Bosworth suggests, in particular, that, because Arrian, in contrast to Strabo, 'says nothing of an earlier visit to the tomb,' Aristobulus may never have examined it in an unplundered condition.⁴⁸

This attempt to deny the authenticity of Aristobulus' first inspection of the tomb on the grounds that Arrian does not make any mention of the incident has not gone unchallenged, however. As Ernst Badian has indicated, Arrian's account of events at Pasargadae is itself 'summary' in places and 'cannot be shown to be more accurate than Strabo's. Presumably Strabo had read Aristobulus on this, as on matters of geography'.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Arrian's account allows us to understand that Aristobulus, acting on Alexander's instructions, was instrumental in confirming the Magi 'who guarded the tomb' (Arr. 6.29) in the prosecution of their duties - and it would have been curious indeed to have taken no account at that time of the treasures that were under guard.

Many commentators have of course made the point that Alexander confronted a period of unusual complexity in the early winter months of 330 B.C. In terms of the extraordinary mix of events that stood in the immediate past, the cities of Susa and Persepolis had each fallen into his hands; he had allowed himself to sit on the royal throne at Susa; he had received his only (albeit temporary) military setback in the narrow defiles that mark the western approaches to Persepolis; and in order to reward the steadfastness of the army, which had known nothing of plunder at either Babylon or Susa, he had permitted the pillage of the Persepolis township. He was suspended in numerous ways, in short, between Macedonian and - to some extent also - Persian expectations. And, at a moment that had not yet witnessed the folly of the burning of Persepolis, it is more than conceivable that he was looking to discover new instruments of accommodation and legitimation that would begin to create a degree of common ground for what he had presumably begun to think of as his two, far from always compatible constituencies.

It is at this juncture - at least in this reconstruction of events - that Alexander set out for the first time on the mountain-fringed roadway that winds its way northwards, parallel with the River Pulvar, from Persepolis to Pasargadae. And if it should not be too speculative to say so, various factors could have been at work in the minds of those who made that journey. We can but believe, for example, that Alexander was perfectly conversant with Herodotus' account of Cyrus' achievements as the founder of the Persian empire and that he was equally well versed in the details of the Cyropaedia, Xenophon's novel which

⁴¹ Although these marriages are only attested in non-Persian sources, there is little reason to doubt that they took place. As Shapur Shahbazi has noted, the accession of Xerxes, the eldest son of Darius' marriage to Atossa, the eldest surviving daughter of Cyrus, duly returned the throne 'to Cyrus' line.' Shahbazi, 1996, 45 with table 2. Cf. also Brosius, 1996, 47f. and Waters, 1996, 18, n. 31.

⁴² Where he is only mentioned as either the father of Cambyses II (see note 34, above) or as the father of Bardiya (DB 13).

⁴³ The trilingual DPb (Darius Persepolis 'b') text reads: 'Darius the great king, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid.' See Kent, 1953, 109, 135.

⁴⁴ Green, 1991, 314.

⁴⁵ Stronach, 1978, 146ff.

⁴⁶ Bosworth, 1988, 92.

⁴⁷ Bosworth, 1988, 92, 154.

⁴⁸ Bosworth, 1988, 154, n. 399.

⁴⁹ Badian, 1996, 20 n. 45.

casts Cyrus in the role of an ideal ruler. For good measure, moreover, it seems only logical to suppose that he was acquainted with the repute of Pasargadae as a sacred capital, as the place where the 'mysteries' of each Persian coronation (including the donning of Cyrus' cloak) regularly took place (Plut., Artax. 3.1). Thus, whether or not Alexander was already beginning to think of a full-scale coronation involving traditional Persian rites, he would at least have been conscious of the fact that, in some significant manner, Cyrus, the founder, was meant to 'give of his spirit' to each of his successors and that the tomb of Cyrus constituted a key location in terms of those formalities which served to legitimize any change of rule in Iran.⁵⁰

But if we may come at last to the issue of the way the inscriptions at Pasargadae were received and reported by the Macedonians, it is clear, as we are now well aware, that Aristobulus was neither very reliable on the question of where he might have seen a given inscription at Pasargadae or on the question of what any such inscription might have actually said.⁵¹ This latter circumstance has drawn the ire of Max Mallowan in particular. He takes the form in which the CMa-related text came to be transmitted to be nothing less than 'a travesty of the truth'.⁵² In his words, 'Greek travellers to the site must have been shown the simple... trilingual inscriptions of Cyrus in cuneiform script to which they added their own comment, or the guide's, that Cyrus had indeed acquired the Empire and that none should begrudge him this monument - the sort of banal remark that any tourist might utter.' For Mallowan, this version of the CMa text is an unforgivable corruption of Cyrus' simple and appealing inscription, 'I am Cyrus, the king, an Achaemenid' - a statement which stands as 'an authentic and contemporary record of the style used... before Darius, when titles became pompous and elaborate.' In his view, the simple wording of the CMa text illustrates a moment in Cyrus' reign when the royal house was still 'groping to establish itself with the aid of formulae that would later become set'.⁵³ Mallowan's comments warrant this measure of attention in that they highlight the manner in which Darius' still early (and hence intentionally minimal) definition of his distinguished predecessor's high rank has long been used to affirm a less than accurate perception of (a) Cyrus' assessment of his own personal standing and (b) the realities of the royal condition that the founder of the Persian empire fell heir to. Needless to say, these same reflections could be used to open up a host of attendant issues. In this forum, however, it is time to turn to one of the principal concerns of this paper: namely the express reasons for the specific form in which the CMa and CMc texts (and only these Pasargadae texts) came to be passed down to us by individuals who were, we should

⁵⁰ The tenor of these last few remarks on the possible relevance of the 'mysteries' owes much to reflections already advanced by E. Badian. See especially, Badian, 1996, 23.

⁵¹ But see also note 2, above.

⁵² Mallowan, 1972, 17.

⁵³ Mallowan, 1972, 2.

never forget, members of Alexander's entourage at a critical juncture in that monarch's search for new instruments of accommodation and legitimation. The testimony that has reached us was not, in short, the chance product of a brief interlude of ease and relaxation during which the casual embellishments of a local translator just happened to be preserved for the edification of posterity. Far from it.

Apart from all else, it is surely no accident that Aristobulus and Onesicritus each found the tomb of Cyrus to be the only local monument that called for description. And whether or not Aristobulus' keen recollection of the cramped and restricted size of the doorway of the tomb⁵⁴ was in some way related (as I would like to think it was) to his subsequent, arresting vision of the contents of the funerary chamber, Aristobulus' detailed description of the objects that then met his gaze now appears to take on a significance that goes substantially beyond any mere interest in inventory - or a desire to supply local color.⁵⁵

In the special circumstances that obtained in February 330 B.C. (or thereabouts) the issue also arises as to exactly why the CMa and CMc texts (or, more strictly speaking, the DMA and DMc texts) were singled out for specific mention. With reference to the initial process of selection, the seemingly humble wording of the two texts may have had an instant appeal. Indeed, the words that were read out in translation may have happened to equate, astonishingly well, not only with certain emotions that could have arisen from viewing the Founder's tomb for the first time, but also with certain preconceived views of Cyrus that had long been familiar to Alexander and his companions. More than this, however, laconic texts nearly always leave the greatest room for interpretation; and, in this instance, as the reports of Aristobulus and Onesicritus each demonstrate, certain elaborations were not discouraged.

At the same time the new rendition of the CMa text was not composed along totally free lines. In support of the fiction that the inscription stood on the walls of the one pertinent structure at Pasargadae, the text obviously had to be given the accepted extra flourishes of an epitaph and it is with this consideration in mind that room was found for such additions as the opening utterance, 'O man,' and the closing words, 'Grudge me not therefore this monument.'⁵⁶ An apparent wish to adhere to the unpretentious wording of the cuneiform text is

⁵⁴ 'So narrow that hardly could one man, and be he of no great stature, enter even with much difficulty.' Arr. Anab. 6.29.

⁵⁵ It deserves to be added that Aristobulus' description of the entrance-way to the tomb of Cyrus has long been a key to the tomb's identification. Without his picture of the contortions that were required to reach the funerary chamber, the case for considering the large-doored (and inscribed!) all-stone Zendan-i Sulaiman as the location of the tomb would have been far harder to reject. For additional notes on the relevant architectural considerations as well as on the fragmentary DMd text, see Stronach 1978, 24-26 and 124f. and idem, 1990, 200f.

⁵⁶ With the elaborations in Plutarch's account very clearly carrying the spirit of these additions to yet another level of invention.

documented, it seems fair to add, in the direct quotation of the phrase, 'I am Cyrus.' It is also true that the stark word 'king' was retained, at least as part of a longer title. In the last analysis, however, Darius' extremely minimal definition of Cyrus' accomplishments and his high royal status opened the way for the all-important additional disclosure (at least from Alexander's point of view) that Cyrus had 'founded the Empire of Persia and was King of Asia.' The latter dignification did not equate with any title that Cyrus had ever known, but by 331 B.C. at the latest it had become Alexander's preferred, personal index of authority.

As has long been recognised, Herodotus is the first author to use the term 'Asia' to refer to the Persian empire. Thus 'the Greeks... led an army into Asia' (Hdt. 1.4) and, in a yet more relevant passage, 'the Persians consider all Asia to belong to them, and to their king' (9.116).⁵⁷ By Alexander's time the word 'Asia' was regularly used in a political sense (quite apart from any parallel geographic usage) to refer to the Achaemenid empire.⁵⁸ As for the sequence of events which gradually came to affirm Alexander's status as 'King of Asia,' the oracle at Gordion offered the first intimation of his future elevation to this rank⁵⁹ and he appears to have begun to think of himself as 'King of Asia' either just after his victory at Issus⁶⁰ or, at the very latest, following his triumph at Gaugemala.⁶¹ If I am correct, therefore, in thinking that the so-called epitaphs of Cyrus were composed at the time of the first Macedonian visit to Pasargadae, such 'epitaphs' were most probably constructed in line with Alexander's ardent desire to be seen as the successor to the Persian throne, even at a time when Darius III was still alive and when the latter had not yet made any wished-for renouncement of his Persian kingship. In sum, then, the major intent behind the invention of the fourth century CMA-related text that Aristobulus claimed to have seen was simple enough: it was intended to flatter Alexander by stating that Cyrus the Great, an individual who stood honored by Greeks and Persians alike, had exercised control over the Persian empire with precisely the same title as that which Alexander had so recently claimed for himself.

It only remains to address a number of more minor points, each of which nonetheless lends a measure of support to the unavoidable conclusion that any

⁵⁷ As D. Georgacas has noted (1969:35), the name Asia had acquired 'continental significance' by the time that Herodotus wrote. For prior uses of the term Asia, including the equation *Assuwa* (or *Asuwa*) = 'Ασῳα; for the Hittite victory over 'the land of *Assuwa*', located in western Anatolia, in ca. 1235 B.C.; and for the possibility that the bounds of Late Bronze Age *Assuwa* may have approximated with those of say, later Lydia, see especially Georgacas 1969:22-75, with Monte and Tischler 1978:52-53 and, most recently, Monte 1992:17.

⁵⁸ See especially Tarn, 1966, 153, n. 1.

⁵⁹ Bosworth, 1988, 54; Green, 1991, 297.

⁶⁰ Bosworth, 1988, 64.

⁶¹ Bosworth, 1988, 85; Badian, 1996, 19.

amplification or curtailment of the original wording was intended to cast Alexander in as favorable a light as possible. With reference to one of the more modest amplifications, where Aristobulus goes so far as to restore the missing patronymic of Cyrus, such an addition might be thought to make sense, at least from a primarily Greek standpoint, if the intent were to distinguish the elder Cyrus from the younger Cyrus (d. 401 B.C.).⁶² On the other hand it is hardly a matter for surprise that the appellation 'Achaemenid' was dropped in both the CMA- and CMC-related texts. This dynastic label was one to which Alexander could lay no direct personal claim and, in the last analysis, it might have been seen to tie Cyrus a little too closely to each and every subsequent member of the Persian royal line.⁶³

Conclusion

The story of the so-called epitaphs of Cyrus is a strange one by any count. Hardly anything of the phrasing that is cited in the above-mentioned classical sources can be seen to equate with expressions that Cyrus himself would have used;⁶⁴ and, if the founder of the Persian empire had indeed inscribed the monuments of his own capital, his near successor, Darius, might never have sought to add multiple texts of his own within the same setting. Furthermore, if Darius had never taken any such action (and if one more speculation is not too out of place) it is perhaps equally unlikely that those who chronicled the details of Alexander's military progress would have discovered any 'epitaphs' that called for exigent notice. As matters stand, however, this improbable sequence of events did take place - and versions of the CMA and CMC texts were each used to answer totally disparate ends.

For those of us who attempt to comment on the fragmentary records of early Iran this sequence of events assuredly presents a cautionary tale. Without an appreciation of the correct date of the cuneiform inscriptions in question, the authorship and purpose of the original 'Cyrus texts' would never have become

⁶² I owe this suggestion to Michael Roaf. There is also, perhaps, an outside possibility that this 'correction' of an earlier 'omission' was commended by the extent to which the repute of Cyrus had become connected with that of Alexander.

⁶³ We may also note in passing that the eyewitnesses saw no good reason to attempt to penetrate the true identity of the various cuneiform scripts on which their constructs at least partly depended. Such recondite matters are not likely to have fallen, after all, within the scope of those materials that Lucian was thinking of when, in a passage of special interest here, he chose to make Alexander refer (in a dialogue with none other than Onesicritus) to the 'fine bait' that his chroniclers ('every one of them') would go to so much trouble to discover in order to 'catch' his 'good will.' Cf. Lucian in c. 40 of his essay, *How to Write History*.

⁶⁴ Even the mention of Cambyses is not correctly phrased. Cyrus himself would have taken care to add 'king of Anshan' (or some other suitable epithet) to his father's name. Cf. note 15, above.

clear. And without a detailed exploration of the ways in which the Greek texts differ from the still extant cuneiform inscriptions it might have been possible to continue to suppose that the former texts were no more than mindless travesties of 'the truth' when, in reality, they can be shown to reflect certain not-to-be neglected processes of reception and projection.

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PLATE CAPTION

I. The tomb of Cyrus, seen from the west. (Photograph: Olive Kitson.)

Figure Captions

1. Pasargadae. Plan of the main monuments. The 'Palace Area' at the center of the site includes the space occupied by Cyrus' innovative four-fold garden design. (Drawing by Cornelia Wolff.)

Key to Figure 1:

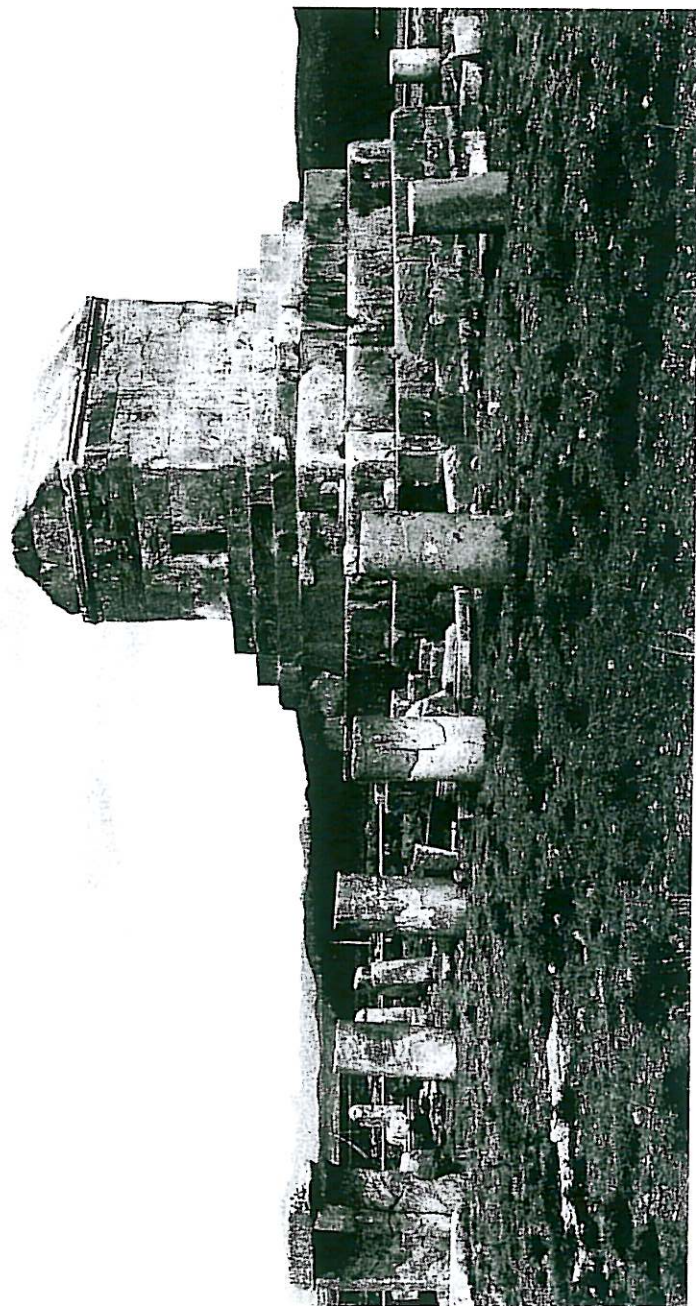
1. The Tomb of Cyrus
2. Gate R
3. Palace S.
4. Palace P
5. The stone water channels of the Royal Garden, with an indication of the 'line of sight' that extended down the long axis of the Garden from the external throne seat in Palace P.
6. Pavilion A
7. Pavilion B

8. The Bridge
9. The Zendan-i Sulaiman
10. The Sacred Precinct
11. The Tall-i Takht
12. The outer fortifications of the Tall-i Takht

2. The trilingual (Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian) CMA inscription from the anta in the south-east portico of Palace S. The Old Persian text already documents the use of diagonal word dividers, but the connecting side-bars which came to be introduced in the CMA text in Palace P are not yet attested. On a more detailed note, the second upright wedge of the first character of the Old Persian word for 'king' (xšayaθiya) is missing. Date: c. 519-510 B.C. (From Stronach, 1978, fig. 32.)

3. The trilingual CMA inscription from the one surviving anta in Palace P. In this instance side-bars are part of the composition. Here the Old Persian text was again marred by an error in that the sculptor cut a second vertical wedge in place of a horizontal wedge in the final character of the word for 'king'. Cf. Stronach, 1978, pl. 71a. (This error in the carving of the inscription stands 'corrected' in the present drawing, which is taken from Sharp 1965:23, lower illustration.)

4. The extant remains of the relief on the right-hand jamb of the north-west doorway of Palace P. The finely cut Elamite and Akkadian inscriptions which occur on the slanting pleats of the king's once partly gilded costume are not shown. (From Stronach, 1978, fig. 47.)



Pl. 1

763

**"Denn Orodes war der griechischen
Sprache und Literatur nicht unkundig ..."**
Parther, Griechen und griechische Kultur

Josef Wiesehöfer

"Le silence presque total des sources classiques sur le comportement culturel des Arsacides comparé à tout ce qu'elles nous apprennent sur l'éducation et les goûts si fortement imprégnés d'hellénisme des autres souverains du Proche-Orient nous font douter que les Rois des Rois, en leurs palais de Nisa, d'Hécatompyle et de Ctésiphon, aient jamais eu une culture grecque assez raffinée pour comprendre et apprécier un tableau figurant Hésiode, Corinne et ses compagnes en poésie." ¹

"Bien enracinés dans le milieu iranien et opposés à l'hellénisme, les Arsacides ne manquaient pas d'être confrontés à l'hostilité de l'élément grec, plus uni par ses attaches culturelles, avec les Séleucides et ensuite avec Rome qu'à la puissance orientale des Parthes. Le grand nombre des mesures entreprises par les Arsacides contre les cités grecques, alliées à la cause séleucide et romaine, pour ne citer que les cas de Séleucie, est une nouvelle preuve de leur parti pris contre l'élément grec ..." ²

Die beiden Zitate zweier Gelehrter, die sich in besonderer Weise um die Erforschung von Geschichte und Kultur des Partherreiches verdient gemacht haben, stehen mit ihrer Bewertung des Verhältnisses der Arsakidenkönige zur griechischen Kultur bzw. zu den Griechen in ihrem Reich stellvertretend für die Ansichten einer Mehrheit von Fachkollegen. Während dabei das erste auf die mangelnde Vertrautheit der Arsakidenkönige mit griechischer Kultur abhebt, sieht das zweite die parthische Politik gegenüber den griechischen Untertanen allein durch Prinzipien der Staatsraison bestimmt; die Selbstdarstellung der Könige als "Griechenfreunde", etwa auf den Münzen, ist dabei, wie an anderer Stelle betont wird, als "instrument politique" und nicht als "symptôme de flatterie à l'adresse des Grecs" ³ zu werten.

¹ P. Bernard, JS 1985, 88. In dem Zitat wird auf die Friesszenen auf den Rhyta von Nisā (s.u.) angespielt.

² J. Wolski, L'hellénisme et l'Iran. In: Mélanges P. Lévêque, t. 2 (Besançon/Paris 1989) 442.

³ Wolski, Gerión 1, 1984, 156.